

tions. The book issued from lectures delivered at Rice University under the auspices of the Rockwell Fund. Consequently, to harp upon the neglect of the Catholic and Jewish contributions to American political thought in favor of the Protestant and upon the author's identification of the religiously legitimated with the religiously motivated would be more revealing of a reviewer's querulousness than of the qualities of the volume.

Despite the restrictions imposed by the format and the occasion, keen insights are revealed in the book. The religious patterns of the colonial and revolutionary periods are viewed as decisive in shaping the structure of government, while in the early nineteenth century religion helped to infuse those governmental forms with a spirit of enlarged democracy. In its treatment of the later period the book is especially satisfying. In linking reform movements and the sectional controversy to the surge of evangelicalism, the author conveys a depth of meaning to ante-bellum political behavior which is absent when events are regarded from alternative perspectives.

The themes with which Dean Nichols deals lend themselves to prophecy, and he has concluded on an admonitory note. The uniqueness of the American experience, Dean Nichols believes, has been its liberating effect upon the individual, and religion has been of major significance in this liberation. Now that forces within and without threaten to push the individual back into the mass, Americans must summon again their sense of dedication and moral purpose. If, in their search for wisdom to guide them and courage to inspire them, they overlook the historic intimacy of religion and democracy, "they walk forward blindly deprived of the great light which is truly theirs." The merits of this little volume, however, are quite independent of any prophetic wisdom displayed therein. By the usual canons of historical writing it may be pronounced intelligent, balanced, and readable.

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*The Pragmatic Revolt in American History: Carl Becker and Charles Beard.* By Cushing Strout. *Yale Historical Publications, The Wallace Notestein Essays*, Number 3. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1958. Pp. ix, 182. Bibliography, index. \$3.50.)

This is a time for critical re-evaluations of the American liberal tradition, as evinced by a spate of recent publications. In this volume Cushing Strout analyzes the contribution of the liberal historians, Carl Becker and Charles Beard, to an American philosophy of history. As the author admits, he has been forced to be both historian and philosopher in attempting to come to terms with his subjects' search for meaning and synthesis in the chaotic process which their relativism made of history. Although the text is studded with technical expressions like "pragmatic relativism," "antiformalism," and "technocratic rationalism," Mr. Strout, who provides a useful glossary in the Introduction, has managed to discuss lucidly and understandably the theory and practice of these two master craftsmen of the historical guild. The story as he tells it, however, is one of tragedy—the tragedy of failure

to transcend the positivism of history-as-science which they attacked so successfully and to construct a viable philosophy of history for the present age.

Since there was little or no active collaboration between Beard and Becker, who were poles apart in temperament and methodology, it is difficult to treat their work together in a short essay. The author hurdles this obstacle well by devoting three separate chapters to each historian, pairing their contributions to historical relativism, historical synthesis, and liberal ideology, respectively, and adding brief introductions and a concluding critique. On the whole, Becker and his study of "climates of opinion" come off better than Beard and his "frame of reference" in Strout's analysis. While Strout sees Beard falling victim to his own relativism, subscribing to a devil theory of history in his two postwar books on Franklin D. Roosevelt's foreign policy, he has nothing harsher to say of Becker than that his "intellectual charm, the bitter-sweet mood of a disenchanted urbanity, has a certain fragility" (p. 133). Mr. Strout not only links the two historians' similar attacks on scientific history but also stresses their common faith in utopian goals to be reached through social and technological progress. Yet the contrasts between them stand out sharply: Beard's iconoclastic temper and Becker's cool detachment; Becker's imaginative treatment of men and ideas and Beard's insistence upon some kind of economic interpretation of history.

Although one might wish for a lengthier and more elaborate exposition of the intellectual background of the movement of ideas Strout describes, the Introduction provides a concise and thoughtful guide to the climate of opinion from which the pragmatic revolt in American history sprang. The author gives more credit for initiating the revolt to Frederick Jackson Turner—who certainly influenced both Becker and Beard—than to those prophets of the New History, James Harvey Robinson and Harry Elmer Barnes. He also emphasizes the American setting more than European influence. Both Becker and Beard, especially the latter, drew much from Croce, Mannheim, and others, but it is the author's contention that they "scanned these foreign philosophies with an alien and eclectic eye and often saw in them only the reflected image of their own purposes, shaped by an American tradition" (p. 28).

Throughout, Strout plays the part of severe but friendly critic, refuting the Becker-Beard outlook by philosophical argument where he can, but always showing high respect for their personal ability and sincerity. At the end he recognizes Charles Beard and Carl Becker as intellectual pioneers who posed new problems, rather than solving them, for their successors. Their skeptical criticism destroyed the fallacies of an untenable historical positivism. Yet as disillusioned pragmatists who sought a way out of relativism they could advance no farther than their positivistic predecessors. This, I take it, is only an historiographical instance of the general dilemma of the whole liberal revolt against formalism.

This is an illuminating essay. The author has traced closely, but without polemic, some of the weaknesses in the philosophical thinking and historical practice of two great historians. We understand better their failures and their greatness.